Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

3 Hh
HOMEMAKERS' CHAT
FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY

U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Wednesday, August 23, 1944

Subject: Women To Save Crops. Information from farm labor officials of the War Food Administration.

A

-oeOoo-

A colonel of infantry in the South Pacific wrote to a woman in Virginia.

"Don't let any of that fruit remain on the trees or on the ground that can be harvested and used," this combat colonel wrote his Virginia friend. "Canned fruit and juices are the backbone of our diet out here where heavy foods are not well suited to the climate, and they assist generally in preparing meals when you are far away from your base in enemy territory and when fires are out."

We have a bumper fruit crop in the United States this year. For peaches, apples, pears and five other major deciduous fruits, the yield is expected to be 18 percent higher than last year. That infantry colonel spoke for every man in uniform when he said don't let any fruit go to waste.

The Director of the Women's Land Army of the War Food Administration, Miss Florence Hall, says saving this bountiful fruit crop is one of the big jobs challenging home-front women. For women are having to supply much of the extra help needed on farms this year .. just as they've done ever since the war started.

Town women have responded well to calls for extra farm workers, but they face the real test this year with the peak harvest season. For every three women farm workers needed last year, four are needed this year. The 1944 food goals are the highest ever set for American farmers.

Already there are seventeen Women's Land Army camps operating in New York State. Service clubs . . . Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions and so on . . . are working with farm labor groups and doing grand jobs to make these newcomers feel the local people appreciate their help and are backing them up.

At Penn Yan where 54 WLA women are housed at the junior high school, the recreation committee of the local War Council arranged a hearty welcome, followed by a swim-and-hot-dog party, and two free tickets to the local skating rink for each girl. Came Sunday and there were words of welcome and helpfulness from the Penn Yan pulpits.

The farm labor shortage in Kansas, in the heart of America's bread basket, is even greater this year than last. Wages are almost three times what they are normally, but still farmers can't get the help they need. No oratory is needed to arouse farm and town women to the seriousness of the farm labor situation in their State. To them has gone the credit for saving the crops ever since the armed forces and war industries began to take men from the Kansas fields.

Many tractor schools were held throughout Kansas this year to train women operators, and the response from these schools was very good. Hundreds of women took the tractor training. At least half of the trucks that brought the bumper wheat crop to Kansas elevators were driven by women. Women handled other farm machinery also. A recent visitor to a Kansas farm found a mother-and-daughter team . . . dust-covered and smiling . . . running the combine, Father was away seeing something about farm machinery, and a second daughter, 12 years old, was running the house and getting dinner ready.

In the great food production centers of California, the peak need for extra women workers is still ahead, but Land Army women are already on the job in a big way in several farming sections. For example, in Monterey County alone in June 600 women worked at berry picking. About 375 women thinned and hoed onions. Seventy-five women picked peas and another 50 worked on irrigation jobs. About 200 did milking, cooking, poultry work, and other farmhand jobs.

The manager of a WLA camp in southern California says when she sees how the waiting list at her camp is growing, she wishes the workers would not all stay so long, and make room for other women who are eager to come. A worker discovers very

soon if she can not stand the Southern California heat . . . it gets up to 110 some days . . . or the work, and home she goes. Those who stay, and they are the big majority, are very happy in their work. Many are service men's wives, or the sisters, mothers, and sweethearts of servicemen.

West Coast Land Army women also thinned apples, and acted as supervisors in the berry fields. In one county 80 percent of the truck drivers for the pea harvest were women.

The peak of the harvest season is facing farmers in nearly all parts of the country right now. Every helping hand is needed. If you live in or near a farming section and would like some of your war work to be farm work, get in touch with your county agricultural agent or farm labor office. Say with the Land Army girl who wrote this little verse:

"We'll climb the tallest ladder, and pick the apples ripe;
The backaches do not matter, you'll never hear us gripe.
We're full of the spirit to pitch in and do;
We came for a purpose and we'll follow through!

# # #